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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 001604

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: TIME FOR CO-CHAIRS TO STAND UP AGAINST
LTTE VIOLENCE

REF: COLOMBO 1537

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey J. Lunstead for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) The co-chairs will meet in New York at a time when the prospects for tangible progress on the Sri Lanka peace process are underwhelming, especially in the wake of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) refusal to accept the latest proposal by the Norwegian facilitators for a cease-fire agreement (CFA) meeting at Colombo airport (septel). In addition, the brutal August 12 assassination of Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Kadirgamar by the LTTE; a presidential election (and, perhaps, a parliamentary election) which at best will turn attention away from the peace process and at worst widen existing ethnic tensions; and a steady drumbeat of killings on the margins of the CFA are exerting concerted pressure on an already faltering peace process. The co-chairs' past practice of issuing carefully measured statements exhorting both sides to pursue peace has had near-negligible impact in influencing Tiger behavior since the 2003 Tokyo donors conference. If the co-chairs are to remain relevant to the fast-disintegrating peace process, it is imperative that they explore new ways to improve Tiger behavior and push the peace process forward. To do this, the co-chairs must stiffen the usual pro-peace statement-which this time should convey an unambiguous message that LTTE terrorism will earn the Tigers international opprobrium and isolation-with tangible immediate actions, i.e., a crackdown on LTTE fundraising, weapons procurement and travel to foreign capitals.

2. (C) First, the co-chairs must unequivocally support the GSL's laudably measured response to Kadirgamar's murder. To its credit, the GSL, while harshly condemning the killing, has made clear that it remains committed to the peace process, as illustrated by its willingness to sit down to discuss CFA implementation with the LTTE when the blood on the Tigers' hands was barely dry. At the same time, the GSL has urged its foreign partners to curb LTTE operations overseas. This "two track" policy, if a little clumsy in formulation and expression in the hectic days right after Kadirgamar's murder, makes sense and needs explicit co-chair support in New York. Thus, the co-chairs should, both in their discussions and statement, harshly condemn Kadirgamar's murder, call for the world community to squeeze LTTE operations abroad and praise GSL willingness to stay in the peace game when it would have been politically popular at home to wave the bloody shirt and pull the plug on the peace process.

3. (C) Second, the co-chairs must underscore their support for the Norwegian facilitators and the Scandinavian-led Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission (SLMM), whose roles have increasingly become a political football in Sri Lanka, especially as election fever mounts. While UN envoy Brahimi, during his recent visit here, scotched rumors that the UN was going to replace the Norwegians, there continues to be an undercurrent of ill-informed resentment against the Norwegians. This has been magnified by unfortunate public statements by the likes of new FM Anura Bandanaraik, and by the strong criticism of the Norwegians in the electoral pact signed last week by SLFP Presidential candidate Rajapakse with the JVP. To their credit, the Norwegians have kept at it when it would have been easy to walk away, as illustrated by the effort to get the LTTE to agree to an airport CFA implementation meeting and the announcement that former SLMM head Tronde Furhovde will visit soon as a Norwegian envoy. The Norwegian and SLMM focus is to concentrate on keeping the CFA intact during the months ahead, especially during the election(s), so that after

the new government emerges, a basis for a return to a tangible peace process will still exist.

14. (C) Third, and most challenging, the co-chairs need to talk bluntly about how they should proceed. There is a tendency by all parties in Sri Lanka to push their country's problems onto foreign actors. In the case of the peace process, this means a constant refrain of wondering when (to name a few) the co-chairs, or the Norwegians, or the Indians will bring peace to Sri Lanka. A good case can be made that perhaps the co-chairs should step back a bit over the next few months and let Sri Lankans, especially during electoral season, sort out peace priorities for themselves. The challenge, of course, would be to do that without creating a sense of abandonment. Unfortunately, the Tigers' assassination of Foreign Minister Kadirgamar has poisoned the pre-electoral political atmosphere by exacerbating ethnic tensions and feeding the Sinhalese nationalist anti-peace lobby, led by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). While co-chair statements in the past have tried to strike a careful balance between encouraging progress and condemning backsliding on both sides, the Tigers' ruthless, unprovoked killing of the Foreign Minister has unquestionably tipped the scales, and the co-chairs must say so explicitly or risk becoming completely irrelevant to the foundering peace process.

15. (C) The LTTE's outrageous behavior merits unambiguous condemnation-tied to immediate negative consequences-from the international community. The co-chairs should state bluntly that LTTE actions are intolerable and unless LTTE behavior improves, the attitude and behaviour of the international community towards the LTTE will be different. The statement must reinforce this stance with explicit actions, e.g., careful investigation of Tiger fundraising operations abroad; curtailing Tiger weapons procurement efforts overseas; an indefinite moratorium on outside visits to Kilinocchi except for Norwegian facilitators; a ban on LTTE visits to foreign capitals.

16. (C) While the co-chairs meeting in New York needs to get down to practical actions rather than focusing on the contents of a statement, it is essential that a public pronouncement follow the meeting. We suggest it incorporate the following themes:

Begin text of draft statement

The co-chairs met in New York on (date) and reviewed the situation in Sri Lanka in light of the brutal August 12 murder of former Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the continued killings on the margins of the cease-fire agreement (CFA) and the impending Presidential election in Sri Lanka. The co-chairs condemned the murder of Minister Kadirgamar in the strongest possible terms and called on the world community to take action against fundraising and weapons procurement by the LTTE. In view of the LTTE's persistent disregard for the commitments it undertook in the CFA, culminating in the ruthless assassination of our respected colleague, the co-chairs decided that, with the exception of Norway, they will suspend any meetings with LTTE representatives in Kilinochchi or elsewhere, including foreign capitals. They called on other countries to implement a similar policy. The co-chairs also praised the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) for its willingness, even in the immediate aftermath of Kadirgamar's murder, to meet in Sri Lanka with the LTTE to discuss improvements in CFA implementation and urged the LTTE to accept the GSL's offer to do so. Moreover, the co-chairs called on all parties to dedicate themselves to maintaining the CFA in the months ahead, especially during the upcoming election in Sri Lanka. Finally, the co-chairs expressed their full support for the tireless facilitation role played by Norway and valuable truce monitoring function performed by the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission.

End text of draft statement.

17. (U) Ambassador will meet with other co-chair chiefs of Mission on Tuesday, September 13 and

will report their thoughts.
LUNSTEAD